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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: INDONESIA WORKS TO GET ELECTION MACHINERY IN GEAR

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Indonesia's national elections are months away, but the GOI is working hard to get the country's election machinery ready for what will be a massive undertaking in this, the world's third-largest democracy. At this point, Parliament still needs to pass a finalized presidential election bill while the Election Commission is working to finalize legislative election candidate and voter registration lists. Over all, the GOI seems to be on target in its preparations, but there is much work to be done. The USG continues to assist in helping build capacity. END SUMMARY.

FOCUS ON PRESIDENTIAL BILL

¶2. (U) Indonesia is working hard to get ready for the legislative and presidential elections scheduled for 2009. Legislative elections are set for April 9, 2009, and potential candidates are already out and about campaigning.

¶3. (U) In the meantime, the first round of the presidential election is tentatively scheduled for July 6, 2009, with a second round (if one is necessary) proposed for September 21, ¶2009. The election dates are not yet settled: the Indonesian legislature (DPR) continues to debate a new presidential election bill, which will contain key information on the process. In any case, the inauguration of the next president must be in October 2009, five years after the last inauguration.

¶4. (SBU) A key--and somewhat confusing--aspect of the presidential bill involves nomination procedures. Previous legislation required that presidential candidates receive 15% or more of the votes from Parliament members in order to earn nomination as a presidential candidate. The bill currently being considered in the Indonesian Parliament (DPR) could raise that minimum requirement to either 20% or 25%. Potential candidates whose parties alone do not meet this threshold may form coalitions with as many other parties as

necessary to reach the minimum threshold. The bill is expected to pass by the end of October, but could take longer.

LEGISLATIVE ELECTION CANDIDATE LIST

15. (U) As noted, the legislative election takes place in April 2009. Per electoral rules already in place, campaigning officially began July 13, 2008, and will end April 5, 2009. Voter outreach is expected to intensify after the week-long Eid al Fitri holiday season ends on October 6. Candidate lists submitted by parties are being reviewed now by the Election Commission and the lists are slated to be formally announced on October 31.

16. (U) Parties seem to be complying with legislation stipulating that 30% of their candidates must be women. There are still some concerns, however. In the 2004 election, women candidates were disadvantaged because their names were placed at the bottom of the ballots and many were not elected. New legislation is meant to change this, though it is unclear how it will work out. Currently, roughly 11% of DPR members are women.

TRYING TO FINALIZE THE VOTER REGISTRATION LIST

17. (C) Another key matter is the national voter registration list. Sri Nuryanti, one of seven national election commissioners, told Pol/C that her office is working hard to finalize the voter registration list by October 10. She anticipates that 175 million voters will be registered, a significant increase over the 130 million registered for the 2004 elections. Nonetheless, other sources indicate that

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there may be delays finalizing the list because millions of potential voters remain unregistered. While acknowledging problems in the process, Sri Nuryanti believes that the Election Commission can have the registration list ready soon. She noted that the process has to be done carefully because "voter registration lists that are woefully inaccurate can cause great controversy during and after elections."

A MASSIVE UNDERTAKING

18. (C) Although the elections are months away, Indonesia continues to be abuzz with discussion of which presidential candidate or party is up or down. Over all, the Indonesian government appears to be on target in its preparations for the election, but more work needs to be done. National elections here are a massive undertaking--Indonesia is the world's third largest democracy and, as noted, something like 175 million people will be registered to vote in the 2009 elections (the voter turnout figure in Indonesia is about 70 percent). The Indonesian Election Commission is considered relatively effective, though it has had its problems, especially at the local level. Our guess is that the GOI will get its machinery in gear. Certainly, there is still time given that the elections are months away. In the meantime, the USG continues to assist the GOI and other partners in helping build capacity.

HUME